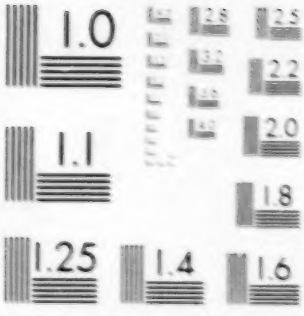

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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Ability Grouping and Reading Achievement by Slow Learners

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Summary - This investigation studied the effects of homogeneous ability grouping versus heterogeneous grouping on the reading achievement by 18 slow learners at the first grade level. Two matched groups of 9 slower learners each were placed in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups and taught by Betts and Welch's basal reading method. Using a pretest and posttest design, no significant difference in reading achievement of the two groups was noted.

The growing number of pupils and the wide range of abilities have increased the administrative and instructional problems in meeting the reading needs of each pupil. There may be a spread of three to four grade levels in reading achievement by the fourth grade level. The slow learner presents a particular problem. He deviates from the norm. Ability grouping has been used to increase his reading achievement. Studies show that reading achievement is influenced by grouping children according to ability.

Baines (1970), and Barthelmess and Boyer (1932) found that disadvantaged children and slow learners showed significant increase in reading skills when grouped by academic ability. On the other hand, Cartwright and McIntosh (1972), studied the effects of three different grouping procedures (heterogeneous, homogeneous, and flexible) on the reading achievement of 260 disadvantaged primary school children. At the end of the 2 year period, there was no significant difference in reading achievement among three groups. Drew (1963) has concluded that results have been at best, inconclusive. The purpose

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of this study was to investigate the effects of grouping by homogeneous versus heterogeneous ability on the reading achievement of slow learners at the first grade level.

A sample of 18 slow learners was selected from two first grade classes from a total population of 55 students from the Sams Elementary School, located in a black residential community on the Westside of Chicago. The study was carried out over a 10 month period (May 1972-March 1973). The school employed both homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping.

The homogeneous group was a self-contained classroom of 27 learners placed on the basis of IQ and reading achievement. The heterogeneous group was also a self-contained classroom of 28 pupils placed on the basis of age. Nineteen pupils were average and above average in reading achievement based on the Metropolitan Reading Test. Nine pupils were classified as slow learners. Nine pupils from the homogeneous group were matched by age, IQ, reading achievement, sex and socioeconomic with the nine slow learners in the heterogeneous group.

Both groups were taught reading 1 hour per day in their respective self-contained classrooms. Both teachers used similar reading formats and The Basal Reading Series by Betts and Welch. The time allotted on topics was also the same.

The Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test, forms A and B, were administered on a pretest and posttest basis. The analysis of covariance was used to test the significance of differences between the pretest and posttest means of the two groups.

Results

There was no significant difference between the means and standard

deviations of the homogeneous and heterogeneous groups on the pretest, so scores were adequately matched initially.

Table I

Mean Pretest and Posttest Scores of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups

Group	N	M(pre)	SD (pre)	M (post)	SD (post)
Homogeneous	9	31	1.49	42	2.68
Heterogeneous	9	29	1.56	38	3.61

On the posttest given after 10 months, the mean score of 42 for the homogeneous group shows a gain of 11 points over the pretest mean of 31, as compared to a gain of nine points for the control heterogeneous group. Although slow learners in the homogeneous group obtained higher reading scores on the posttest than the children in the heterogeneous group, the difference was not statistically significant. The type of grouping used in this study appeared to have no effect on reading achievement by these slow learners.

Although the findings were not statistically significant, the researchers noted these differences between the two groups: (1) The mean of the homogeneous group was higher than the mean of the heterogeneous group. (2) The slow learners in the former group tended to show higher achievement in reading readiness than children in the heterogeneous group. (3) The homogeneous group members began reading in the first grade basal reading series, Around Green Hills near the end of this study, (4) whereas the heterogeneous group began reading the primer, Up the Street and Down. The teacher of this group felt that the children were not able to keep the pace designed in reading format. Some children did not acquire the skills necessary to proceed to a new unit in reading instruction.

There is a continuous need for further research on the effects of ability grouping on the reading achievement of slow learners. A larger sample, additional supplementary readiness materials, and longitudinal research may yield more information than the present study of small groups in intact classes.

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